

To: The House Natural Resources, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation Committee
Regarding: SB 1350
Date: November 8, 2012

My Name is Melba J Coleman; I believe decisions regarding the wolf must be based on the most current scientific data. I was disappointed by Senator Casperson's remarks following my testimony in this Committee on 10/17/12. He indicated that because I do not live in the U.P., I do not understand the problem and my opinion should be discounted. But the fact is, wolves belong to all of the people of Michigan—and indeed to all the citizens of the U.S., because they use our National Forests. For the record, however, while I currently live in Hazel Park, I previously lived in Norway, in Dickinson County. There, I was able to enjoy wildlife, including wolves. To hear a wolf howl, to stumble upon a track, enlightened me to know the wolf is flourishing. Friends would visit in hopes to catch a glimpse of these apex animals I spoke of. Though I moved down state, I travel to the Upper Peninsula 2-3 times a year for this reason, as so do many others.

I am concerned that Senator Casperson is misrepresenting the facts to the committee. He has repeatedly said that wolf numbers far exceed population goals. The approved wolf management plan does not establish an upper limit for the number of wolves in the state. The criteria for state delisting were 200 wolves for five consecutive years, but 200 wolves was not a target population size. He also said that wolves are impacting people's businesses without being specific. What businesses, and how are they being impacted? Michigan law allows farmers and dog owners to take lethal actions when non-lethal measures are ineffective. Farmers are compensated for verified losses caused by wolves, and a grant is available to provide non-lethal deterrence measures to reduce depredations. Those measures were put in place to protect Michigan farmers and businesses from wolf depredation.

Senator Casperson seems to believe that a hunting season is needed to reduce livestock and pet depredation and enhance public safety. There is not one case of any wolf in the state that has threatened or harmed any human. Further, the DNR has the authority to remove wolves that have become habituated. If federal tax dollars support the state, it seems to me more voices should be considered. Visitors spend thousands of dollars to hike our trails, canoe our rivers, ride ATVs and snowmobile and surveys show they value the wolf. When Northern Lower Peninsula & Upper Peninsula residents were asked, 73% somewhat approve or strongly approve of having wolves in Michigan.

Wolves help sustain nature's balance for our ecosystem. With less than 700 wolves in the state there is no scientific need to have a recreational hunting trapping season.

The DNR acknowledges that the hunting of wolves is biologically complex and many factors must be considered, not just the opinions of those who want a trophy animal. The need for peer reviewed research and the need for scientific wolf management is imminent – we have a management plan that is supported by 20 different groups, including hunting groups. Overall, wolf depredation in Michigan is low. Between 1996 & 2012, there have been less than 250 depredation events. Wolf-related conflicts are often caused by the behavior of a few individual wolves, and management at small scales can often address problems effectively. DNR has exercised their authority to remove wolves that have become habituated to people. In April 2011, DNR destroyed three wolves. This past spring eight more wolves were killed in Ironwood. This control action was ordered by the MI DNR as a pro-active measure. The wolves

were in a residential area, drawn there in part because of the recreational feeding of deer. The wolves did not threaten or harm any human.

The approved wolf management plan outlines approaches for managing many wolf-related issues. The approaches were chosen based on scientific evaluation of the potential impacts to the wolf population, their feasibility and their probability of success and because they appear to be acceptable to most Michigan residents.

With all the non-lethal and lethal measures available to control problem wolves, there is no scientific evidence to support the need for a recreational hunting season for wolves.

With the delisting of the wolf, the Michigan Wolf Management Plan can now be fully implemented including the issuance of landowner permits when non-lethal measures are ineffective.

I am not a biologist, nor do I have a degree in wildlife .What I do have is compassion and the sense to know it is not necessary for the wolf to be designated a game for the DNR to manage wolf conflicts. To educate people about these apex animals and to diminish any myth or negative feeling that people have about wolves is most important to me. All in all, I want to make a difference. Once a wolf is gone from this earth, there is no way of bringing it back. Extinction is forever.

Let's give the Wolf Management Plan time to work, there is no need to rush. There is no emergency. We need to evaluate the impacts lethal control will have on pack dynamics and population growth before designating the wolf a game animal. I urge committee members to reject Senate Bill 1350.

Respectfully,

Melba J. Coleman
1403 E Maxlow Ave.
Hazel Park, MI 48030
248-953-7305
Shadesofblue60@comcast.net